

Message Text

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GZR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1993

LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

DEPT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, PLO

SUBJECT: DAOUDI COMMENTS ON SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANESE CRISIS

REF: DAMASCUS 1959

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING PRESIDENTIAL POLITICAL ADVISOR DAOUDI, SYRIAN
DIPLOMATIC

OMATIC INITIATIVE IN BEIRUT (REFTEL) WAS DESIGNED AVOID
SITUATION DEVELOPING WHICH MIGHT TRIGGER REPZAT OF EVENTS OF MAY
1973. SYRIA HAS PAINFUL MEMORIES OF HOW EVENTS DETERIORATED

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AT THAT TIME INTO COMMITMENT OF SAIQA AND PLA UNITS TO BATTLE

WITH LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES, FOLLOWING GOL'S BOMBARDMENT OF REFUGEE CAMPS AND PROLONGED BORDER CLOSURE. DAOUDI MAINTAINED THAT AT NO POINT HAD SARG OPTIONS INCLUDED DIRECT SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON. THIS WOULD BE INCONCEIVABLE BECAUSE OF PROBABLE ISRAELI COUNTERACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DESCRIBING SYRIAN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WHICH CULMINATED IN PRESIDENT'S DECISION SEND KHADDAM AND DEPUTY MIN DEFENSE NAJI JAMIL TO BEIRUT LAST SATURDAY, DAOUDI EXPLAINED TO ME MAY 28 THAT SYRIA WAS CONVINCED SITUATION WAS RAPIDLY SLIDING INTO CHAOS. DAMASCUS CONSIDERED THAT PRESIDENT FRANJIEH, BY DESIGNATING A MILITARY GOVERNMENT, HAD SERIOUS MISJUDGED LEBANON'S OWN POLITICAL CLIMATE. FRANJIEH COULD NOT, DAOUDI MAINTAINED, HAVE FORESEEN THE RAPID COALESCING OF LEBANESE MOSLEM OPINION AGAINST HIS ACTION. FRANJIEH BY ALL ACCOUNTS WELCOMED SYRIAN MISSION; CERTAINLY IT COULD NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED OVER HIS OPPOSITION.

3. DAOUDI ACKNOWLEDGED SOME LEBANESE UNDOUBTEDLY REMAINED UNCONVINCED OF THE LIMITED GOALS WHICH SYRIA HAD DECIDED ON LAST WEEKEND AND WHICH KHADDAM PURSUED DURING HIS UNEXPECTEDLY LONG STAY IN BEIRUT. THESE GOALS, MOST SIMPLY PUT, WERE TO HELP RESTORE CALM TO LEBANON AND PRESERVE THE STRENGTH OF THE PLO MODERATES WITHIN PALESTINIAN CIRCLES.

4. SYRIA WAS MOTIVATED BY NEED TO ACT IN TIMELY FASHION SO AS TO FORESTALL REPETITION OF MAY 1973 EVENTS WHEN PLA AND SAIQA UNITS BATTLED WITH LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES FOLLOWING LEBANESE ARMY ATTACKS ON PALESTINIAN STRONGHOLDS. I NOTED THERE SOME SPECULATION IN TOWN THAT SYRIA HAD ACTED SO IT WOULD NOT BE COMPELLED COMMIT OFFICIAL SYRIAN FORCES SHOULD GOL MILITARY GOVERNMENT COMMIT ARMY AGAINST PALESTINIANS. DAOUDI IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THIS INCONCEIVABLE GIVEN PROBABLE ISRAELI COUNTER-INTERVENTION. "BESIDES," HE COMMENTED, "THERE ARE THE OTHER WAYS TO HANDLE SUCH A SITUATION SUCH AS WERE USED IN 1973." (COMMENT: PHRASE "OTHER WAYS" WAS CLEARLY INTENDED REFER TO PLA AND SAIQA FORCES.)

5. DAOUDI CONTINUED THAT SYRIA ACTED WITH FULL AWARE-
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NESS OF LEBANESE POLITICAL COMPLEXITIES AND SENSITIVITIES. KHADDAM HAD CONSULTED ALL POWER BASES, INCLUDING DRUZE, SHIITE, CHAMOUN, GEMAYAL, AND MARONITE PATRIARCH, IN ADDITION TO SUNNI LEADERSHIP. SOME PHALANGISTS AS WELL AS SOME EXTREMIST PALESTINIANS, DAOUDI COMMENTED, TEND TO ASSUME THAT SYRIA WILL SUPPORT PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND PLO UNDER ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. THIS IS A FALSE ASSUMPTION; SYRIA MUST AND WILL BALANCE ITS INTERESTS BETWEEN GOOD RELATIONS WITH GOL AND WITH

PALESTINIANS. IT HAD TO ACT -- IT COULD NOT AFFORD TO LET PALESTINIANS SUSPECT IT WAS READY TO ABANDON THEM, ESPECIALLY NOW IN MIDST OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS FOR JOINT SYRO-PALESTINIAN MILITARY COMMAND.--BUT ITS ACTION WAS CAREFULLY CALCULATED. EGYPT, ALGERIA, AND SAUDI ARABIA HAD ALREADY BEGUN WORKING TO RESTORE CALM AND SYRIA, THE MOST DIRECTLY INVOLVED OF ALL OTHER ARAB STATES, COULD NOT STAY ON THE SIDELINES.

6. IN ASIDE, DAOUDI SAID SYRIA UNCERTAIN WHO HAD BEEN STIR-RING THE LEBANESE POT OVER LAST FEW WEEKS. "THEY COULD HAVE BEEN IRAQIS, PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS, CIA AGENTS, OR ISRAELIS." HE NOTED HE UNCERTAIN HOW MUCH USG KNEW OF ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS IN BEIRUT. ASSURED HIM WE WERE NOT CUT IN ON SUCH INFORMATION AND THAT USG'S INTEREST WAS A STABLE LEBANON WHERE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS WOULD POSE NO THREAT TO OUR ONGOING EFFORTS TO SECURE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE SETTLEMENT.

7. COMMENT: DAOUDI IN DISCUSSING SYRIA'S ROLE SPOKE WITH APPARENT FRANKNESS AND FOR HIM AN UNUSUAL INTENSITY. HIS PRESENTATION PUTS THE BEST POSSIBLE IMAGE ON SYRIA'S ROLE AND WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN EMBASSY BEIRUT'S ASSESSMENT AS TO HOW WELL IF FITS THE FACTS.
MURPHY

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY.

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